



# MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Dogs in Hot Cars – A Dangerous Combination

**July 6, 2010 – Waterford, VA** – Nearly every day in spring and summer, Loudoun County Animal Control Officers respond to reports of dogs left inside cars on hot days. The cars are usually found in shopping center parking lots, and the pet owners often offer the same response - "I was only in the store for a few minutes." Not only is it illegal to leave an animal in a car when the outside temperature is above 70 degrees and the temperature inside of a vehicle is above 80 degrees, but it can also be deadly.

Last summer, a dog died from heat stroke after being left inside a vehicle in a hotel parking lot in Loudoun County. Yesterday, Animal Control responded to an incident which proved to be a very close call.

Daisy, an 11 year old cocker spaniel, was accompanying her owners on a holiday road trip from North Carolina to Pennsylvania, when they decided to make a stop at a Sterling grocery store. Daisy was left inside the car, windows rolled up and with the sunroof open, around 2:00 in the afternoon. The high temperature yesterday was 97 degrees.

Luckily, a passerby spotted Daisy in the car and called Animal Control. When the Animal Control Officer arrived, Daisy was laying down inside the car, panting heavily and in obvious distress. The Officer's temperature gauge recorded the interior temperature of the car at over 126 degrees.

Daisy's owners returned to the car shortly after the Officer's arrival, and they opened the car. The Officer moved Daisy to her air-conditioned van and found Daisy suffering from signs of heat stroke: pale, dark blue gums, difficulty catching her breath and unable to visually focus. Daisy's temperature was taken and found to be over 106 degrees. A dog's normal body temperature is between 100 and 102.5 degrees.

The Animal Control Officer rushed Daisy to a nearby veterinary hospital, where she was treated and is expected to recover. Daisy's owners were charged for a dog confined to a vehicle, a Class 1 misdemeanor under County code 612.25(b).

A study from Stanford University shows that even on comparatively cool days, such as 72 degrees, a car's internal temperature will rocket to 116 degrees within 60 minutes. **And keeping the windows open a crack hardly slows the rise at all.** (<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn7631>) Dogs are vulnerable to heat stroke at temperatures over 110 degrees.

Heat is especially hard on dogs because they can only cool themselves by panting and sweating through their paws. With only hot air to breathe, dogs and other animals can suffer irreparable brain damage and even die of heatstroke. Warning signs include restlessness, excessive thirst, heavy panting, lethargy, lack of appetite, dark tongue, rapid pulse, fever, vomiting, glazed eyes, dizziness, or lack of coordination. Immediate veterinary care is required for animals in this condition.

Persons seeing dogs left unattended in hot cars should immediately:

1. Record the make, model, color, license plate number, and location of the vehicle.

2. Report this information to the store/mall manager and ask that the owner of the pet be paged.
3. Call Loudoun County Animal Care and Control at 703-777-0406.
4. If possible, stay until Animal Control arrives to help them locate the vehicle quickly.

**The best way to prevent pets from suffering in hot cars is to leave them at home.** Pets should never be left unattended in vehicles, even if the air conditioning is running. It only takes a few minutes for a pet to suffer illness or even death inside a hot car.

For more information from the United Animal Nations on dogs in hot cars, visit [www.mydogiscool.com](http://www.mydogiscool.com).

Loudoun County Animal Care and Control is dedicated to serve and protect the public's health and safety and to assure the welfare of animals by promoting and providing for their safe, humane and lawful treatment.

The Loudoun County Animal Shelter is located at 39820 Charles Town Pike, Waterford, VA 20197. The Shelter is open Saturday through Wednesday. Shelter information & directions can be found at [www.loudoun.gov/animals](http://www.loudoun.gov/animals). The Loudoun County Animal Shelter is a tobacco free campus.

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